



## Taum Sauk Mountain State Park

# STANDING ABOVE THE REST

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In the midst of today's urban growth, make the great escape to Missouri's wilderness – Taum Sauk Mountain State Park. The park includes 7,448 acres of untamed, unspoiled land that provides solitude and a wilderness quality hard to find in today's crowded world.

Located in the St. Francois Mountains, Taum Sauk Mountain State Park stands above others – literally. The park's namesake, Taum Sauk Mountain, rises to 1,772 feet above sea level, making it the highest point in Missouri. It is an easy walk from the parking lot to the highest point.

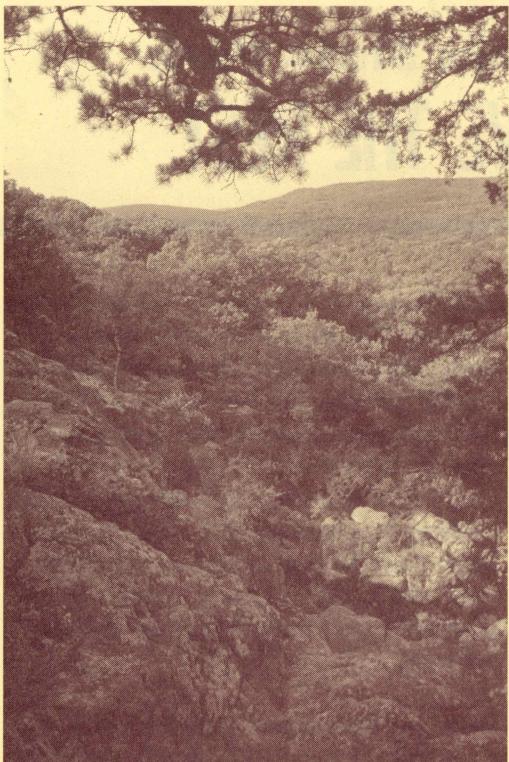
The moderately rugged, three-mile Mina Sauk Falls loop trail takes visitors to the state's tallest waterfall. In wet weather, Mina Sauk Falls drops 132 feet down a series of rocky volcanic ledges into a clear, rock-bottom pool at the base. In any weather, this trail offers spectacular views of the state's deepest valley to the west, which has up to 700 feet of vertical relief between the creek and the tops of the mountains crowding in on all sides. Below, the crystal-clear Taum Sauk Creek flows the length of the park. With its undeveloped watershed, this creek has been recognized as a State Outstanding Resource Water for its aesthetic and scientific value.

One mile below the falls along the Taum

Sauk Section of the Ozark Trail lies Devil's Tollgate. This eight-foot-wide passage takes visitors through 50 feet of volcanic rhyolite standing 30 feet high. The Ozark Trail continues on to nearby Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park, covering a total of 12.8 miles, providing solitude and scenery to hikers and backpackers. The 33-mile Taum Sauk Section is part of the Ozark Trail, which will eventually connect St. Louis with the Ozark Highlands Trail in Arkansas.

Taum Sauk Mountain State Park is a major part of the 7,028-acre St. Francois Mountains Natural Area. This designation, Missouri's highest honor, recognizes the area's outstanding natural and geologic features. The St. Francois Mountains Natural Area is the largest natural area in the state, giving a glimpse of what the rest of the area's landscape might have been like before the influence of human settlement.

The St. Francois Mountains exhibit a high degree of diversity and a high quality of biological resources. Natural communities of Taum Sauk Mountain State Park include oak-hickory upland forest, glades, savannas, flatwoods and bottomland forest, as well as aquatic plants and animals. These areas provide relatively undisturbed native habitats for wildlife. They also offer excellent opportunities for scientific research.



DNR file photo.

### *Taum Sauk Mountain State Park is full of breathtaking views.*

The geologic history of Taum Sauk Mountain State Park and the St. Francois Mountains began almost 1.5 billion years ago. A series of volcanic eruptions spewed dust, ash and hot gases into the sky. Fine-grained rhyolite formed at the surface, while coarse-grained granite formed below. For hundreds of thousands of years, erosion worked away at this igneous rock, leaving only the roots of the mountains behind.

Shallow seas periodically covered the remaining knobs, depositing almost a mile of sedimentary dolomite and sandstone on

top of the volcanic rhyolite. Uplift of the entire Ozark region and subsequent increased erosion wore away much of the sedimentary rock, once again exposing the ancient rock beneath it.

The park's volcanic origin is visible in its many rocky openings, called glades. These glades are home to many unusual desert-adapted plants and animals, such as the sundrop flower and the eastern collared lizard. Prairie plants, such as Indian grass, little bluestem, white prairie clover, prairie parsley, ashy sunflower, prairie blazing star, rattlesnake master and white wild indigo, flourish in the glades and the adjacent woodlands. Carefully planned prescribed burns are used by land managers to preserve these glades and open woodlands.

Taum Sauk Mountain State Park features a campground with 12 basic campsites. The nearby picnic area allows visitors to relax and enjoy lunch under the trees. Drinking water and a pit latrine are available. A special-use area is available for use by non-profit organized youth groups.

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